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Letter from the Canadian Left

University
Archives

Gentlemen of the political, corporate, and mindfucking elites.

We have been playing games with each other. For months we have been shadow-boxing, hurling invective at each other from our respective barricades. Our rhetoric has been escalating, here and there the threat of violence has been invoked, but so far, in good Canadian fashion, our much heralded trial of strength has proved a make-believe.

I thought it was time to try set matters aright, to revive the flagging spirits in both camps, to prevent the Canadian marshmallow from engulfing our conflict, as it has engulfed a hundred others before. In short, gentlemen, I wish to tell you to your faces why we are at war, and why the hatred we feel for you, and everything you represent, can only grow.

Hatred is a powerful word, and I have used it advisedly. Make no mistake about it, there is no possible consensus between the two posi-

tions, the two world visions from which we argue. You represent the social forces that have made this country what it is, a non-country, a colony, a society of repression. Your very liberalism and moderation leave a bitter taste. We (and there are thousands of us across this country) represent another Canada, a radical Canada that has yet to be created. Our very radicalism is at the moment our greatest hope.

We are not the first radicals in this country, though you have done all within your power to suppress our historical memories. Indeed, you accuse us openly of being hotplant creatures, mere hangers-on on the coattails of radicals in the United States and elsewhere, oblivious to Canada's traditions and temperament. A strange charge coming from your lips, you who have always looked to an imperial power for direction, and defined Canada in British American terms. An understandable charge, when we recall that the traditions and

temperament you summon up are the liberal-conservative traditions that have served your interests and helped you maintain your domination over Canadian society.

The truth, gentlemen, is that there have been other traditions in this country, that your version of Canada was established over the backs of the population, and without their participation. Your ancestors wanted to preserve a hierarchical, non-egalitarian society under the British flag, and ensured that democratic sentiment was kept out of the closed meetings that preceded Confederation. Earlier, they had suppressed the revolts of 1837, and established the alliance between railway and financial interests and a reactionary Church in Quebec, from which the Canadian ruling class was to come.

You established a country in which the speculator could thrive, and in which foreign capital worked hand in hand with domestic, to develop a stable appendage to Empire.



Deference and gentility were values you consciously tried to inculcate into the population while loyalty to imperial values became the hallmark of your nationalism. Your contempt for French Canada was extreme, and from your hanging of Riel through the elimination of language rights, you strove to keep the French in a subordinate place inside your Canada.

In 1899 you flocked to the imperial banner in the Boer War, and again in 1914. There was never a question in your mind regarding Canada's place alongside Britain in her imperialist wars. Blood and treasure flowed from this country unmeasured. Those who opposed conscription, especially in Quebec, were harshly put down.

Gentlemen, perhaps all this history bores you, and you find it highly irrelevant to the situation we are in today. A little patience, then, for it is exceptionally relevant. We, at least, recognize a continuity in your past.

The imperialist of 1914 became the policeman of 1919 putting down the Winnipeg General Strike, and stirring up the bogey of a Red Scare. Have you forgotten? Was the wave of syndicalism and working class consciousness that swept the country after World War I also foreign to Canada's traditions? Was the RCMP shooting into the ranks of the population of Winnipeg to preserve democracy from its enemies?

To be sure, gentlemen, you proved wiser than the Bourbons. You recognized the need to introduce a greater sense of participation into Canadian life. You saw liberalism as an answer to radicalism, and gave us MacKenzie King. Throughout the 1920's he talked reform, while playing off the populist currents of the West. In the 1930's you explained the Depression as an act of fate.

You also became greater nationalists, shrewdly enough, after the First War. Britain's world position had begun to decline. Already, American capital was beginning to enter this country in significant quantities. You sniffed the air, stood off from the old imperialism, and began to wait for the birth of the new Empire.

The Second World War marked the turning point in our national fortune. Canada's American destiny suddenly became clear, and you linked the future of Canadian liberal capitalist society to the American chariot. An intelligent decision, as far as your own interests were concerned. The United States became both the prime source of capital for Canadian development, and Canada's dominant market. Canada became a resource supplier to the American military-industrial complex, but at the same time, a junior participant in the American Empire. The Cold War found Canada squarely in the American camp.

Domestically, you headed off any challenge from the left, by instituting elements of welfarism in the post-war period. Unemployment insurance, family allowance, old age pensions, served to stabilize the Canadian economy, and gave the population at large a sense of egalitarianism that reduced the attraction of the real thing.

Thus, we had the barren years of the St Laurent period, economic growth based on resource giveaway, liberal smugness based on self-righteous anti-communism. Le chef continued to keep Quebec in the straight jacket of the ancien régime, with no complaint on your part. American technology, American imperial policy, brought at the same time American values, which you welcomed with open arms. The best of young Canadians continued to flee the country, to the United States, to England, to France, anywhere

that an intellectual tradition and historical identity could be found. You denied Canada an identity of her own, imposing your second-rate, derivative values on the entire society.

Where was a Canadian liberalism worth talking about? The intelligensia of this country numbered perhaps a dozen members. You had no imagination where the Canadian economy or society were concerned, no desire to develop a radical Canadian consciousness. Your media and universities played purely legitimizing roles. You saw the colonial reality of Canada as the only possible model.

Inexorably, you drove Canada into the ground, turning her into a mere region of a North American economy. You spurned nationalism for an internationalism, that became a euphemism for subordination to the American Empire. You embarked on development of Canada along liberal capitalist lines, perpetuating the inegalitarianism as between regions and classes in this country. You denied any notion of control from below, of democratization, save in the formal, purely symbolical sense, of elections.

In short, you fucked this country under the guise of liberal ideology. You were liberal with Canadian resources, and positively libertine, where American demands for Canadian military and political concessions were concerned. You were liberal where economic policy was concerned, making sure that the state did not interfere with the process of self-enrichment of the corporate elite. You were liberal in your politics, preferring an apolitical, easily manipulated citizenry, to one that might positively act in its own interests.

There was no place for dissent in your Canada, except of the decorous, moral kind. Certainly conflict was out of the question, where all were

in agreement on the virtues of liberal ways. The middle way was the Canadian way, compromise was the only political virtue in the Canadian paradise.

You ran the institutions of Canada as your closed domain. Perhaps a thousand individuals controlled the major chartered banks, insurance companies, and leading manufacturing firms, through interlocking directorships. The lawyers' guild ensured that the political system would be managed with the corporate elite's interests in mind. The universities, suppliers of the vital human resources to staff advanced capitalism, were closely controlled by that same elite. Power was exercised behind closed, largely unknown, doors. Everything was working perfectly, until the underbody began to fall apart. Nationalism swept Quebec, threatening to carry the old federalist compromises before it. You offered still more compromises, but the demand for self-determination took on ominous overtones. The mob began to enter politics, here a terrorist group, there a march or strike. One began to detect the first glint of fear and hatred in your eyes.

In the middle-sixties, a wave of strikes swept both public and private domains. Labour unrest was nothing new where you were concerned, yet you could not help noticing a disquieting trend. Inflation was beginning to get out of hand, with wages hardly able to keep suit. Professional and white collar groups, in addition to blue collar labour, were becoming more militant. Was one witnessing merely the normal round of economist demands? Or was this militancy a response to the objective repression of advanced capitalism? As strike followed strike, you began to wonder.

In the late 1960's, the wave

of student unrest throughout the world suddenly threatens to strike home. Can it be that demands for democratization of the university put you into panic, and set your media into hysterical evocations of violence and revolt? Are you really so unsure of your support, worried as to the legitimacy of your position? Can it be that student radicals have struck a vital chord?

Gentlemen, your masks have been removed, we know damned well the wily manoeuvres you have undertaken to head off the hour of reckoning. Is it for nothing that the administrators of your institutions of mind-fucking run around, telling all who will listen of the need to give the student a sense of participation in the university? How well chosen their liberal rhetoric is. It is only the semblance of participation they have in mind, not real power.

We know only too well what your death-bed conversion conotes, how MacPherson Reports and student representatives on Boards of Governors are supposed to nip in the bud all potential student radicalism. We know also that your final resort would be coercion, that any student consciousness that led to revolt would provoke the same repression on your part, as that offered by your brother liberals at Columbia, or the not so liberal mayor of Chicago. Beyond Claude Bissel lies not only the corporate elite, but the repressive power of the state.

Gentlemen, we have had your liberalism up to our noses, and we have had enough. We have watched you turn the universities of this country into branch-plant affairs, to service a branch-plant economy. We have watched the process of Americanization in the university proceed apace, with American norms and methodology coming to dominate one dis-

cipline after another. We have seen consultants for the US Defence Department appointed Associate Chairmen in Canadian Departments of Political Science. We have had all we want of American reactionaries, fleeing the fuck-up of liberal America, and coming to foist that same fuck-up on us.

Gentlemen, your colonialism has gone too far, you threaten to cheat us out of our birthright. Do you expect us to sit idly by, while Canadian resources are squandered, while you commit economic, political, and spiritual buggery with the United States? Do you think junior partnership to American imperialism is the only role Canada can perform?

Gentlemen, your continued domination of the Canadian economy is unacceptable in any form. We refuse to perpetuate a society of privilege and class division, to allow the university to become a mere servicing agency to maintain your grip on this country. The economic system of this country must be democratized, must be socialized. An independent Canada can only be viable outside a liberal capitalist framework. Control from below at all levels of the economy, democratic control, is the necessary alternative to the market society.

Gentlemen, your vision of Canada is sterile. Intellectually you have given us little, and much to be ashamed of. We have no history, no intellectual tradition, only travesty. Your Canada has been a non-nation, provincial, corporate dominated, turned in upon itself, a mute follower in world affairs. Your culture has reflected your parochialism, your colonialism. A vibrant, popular culture must still be created ex nihilo.

We do not claim to have any final blueprint, indeed we recognize the obstacles

that strew our path. But we know this country must be transformed. For over a century you have kept democracy out, and given us formulae that perpetuate your rule. Your time is up.

Philip Resnick
(Toronto Student
Movement)

PETERBORO

The Peterboro Examiner strike escalated last Friday, as 250 students moved in to help striking reporters and local police made 15 arrests.

The Thompson-owned paper was able to publish its regular editions, but before the day was over the strikers were convinced the struggle could be won with student help.

Friday's Examiner had been printed Thursday -- not exactly hot off the press -- and pickets were unable to halt the distribution trucks. Hopes of halting Saturday's paper were dashed when printers crossed the picket line set up by the striking Newspaper Guild.

But Guild members were very pleased with the student support, and are confident the strike can now be won. Both strikers and students are stressing the issue of

Lord Thompson's near-monopoly press-control, and the broader question of capitalist-owned media.

The 250 student supporters included about 45 from U of T, and others from York, Ottawa and Waterloo. This is thought to be the first time in Southern Ontario that students have joined a militant picket line.

Student leaders feel it would be difficult to mobilize support again before Christmas, but if the strike continues into January there will likely be a four-day continuous mass picket. Guild strikers feel such an action will probably win the strike, and they are encouraging students to organize it.

The arrests on the picket line followed clashes with police in which three girls were injured, one with a minor concussion. Two U of T students were among those arrested, on charges ranging from causing a disturbance to assaulting a police officer.

The clashes erupted when pickets attempted to block vehicles entering and leaving the Examiner plant. Some 30 policemen used force to clear a path for the cars and trucks.

The only serious violence occurred Friday afternoon and apparently resulted from mistaken identity. Four policemen jumped a non-striking printer and, according to witnesses, beat the man unconscious. The printer was later charged with creating a disturbance. One union official has sent a telegram to the Ontario Attorney General protesting the incident.

Late Friday evening a meeting was held with a number of students and strikers in attendance. Some students remarked that the strikers were interested in more than just higher wages.

"Some of the reporters are getting very turned on to the idea of the staff running the paper," one student commented.

In a late development, students at Guelph have decided to publish a counter-newspaper in Peterboro. Residents are being asked to stop buying the Examiner, and the counter-paper would hopefully give Peterboro a taste of a newspaper not dominated by capitalists.

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